

# Congress of the United States

Washington, D.C. 20515

January 17, 2019

Donald J. Trump  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Trump,

During the past several months, the Government of Guatemala has taken a series of actions that have undermined the rule of law in that country. These actions risk progress made through the U.S. Strategy for Engagement in Central America, a multi-year U.S. investment in improving governance, security, and prosperity, funded with strong bipartisan support. We are deeply concerned that, absent a strong U.S. response, the current government's pattern of anti-democratic behavior will continue to escalate, and that Guatemala will descend into lawlessness. We therefore implore you to take urgent action to uphold the rule of law in Guatemala and prevent further destabilization of the region.

On August 31, 2018, Guatemala's Minister of the Interior ordered U.S.-provided J8 jeeps with armed agents to patrol in front of the United States Embassy and the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG). That day, the President of Guatemala appeared at a press conference, flanked by military officials, to declare that Guatemala would end the mandate of CICIG, a highly successful body that combats corruption and organized criminal networks, and that has been strongly supported by the United States since its creation in 2007. After this blatant attempt to intimidate the United States and the international community, and even though our own equipment was turned against our diplomats, the administration's only response was a tweet by Secretary Pompeo stating that, "Our relationship with Guatemala is important. We greatly appreciate Guatemala's efforts in counternarcotics and security."

The administration's weak response to this provocation has emboldened the government and its allies, who are facing multiple corruption investigations from both CICIG and Guatemalan prosecutors. Since August 2018, the government has attempted to expel key CICIG investigators; purged high-level, U.S.-trained and vetted police officials; and taken steps to remove judges from the country's highest court. On Saturday, January 5, 2019, the government flagrantly disobeyed a court ruling, detaining CICIG investigator Yilen Osorio at Guatemala City's Aurora airport. And on January 7, the government announced that it was immediately terminating CICIG's mandate, despite the fact that its creation was ratified by Guatemala's national Congress. These actions threaten to disrupt the constitutional order in Guatemala,

weakening both investor confidence and the capacity of the Guatemalan justice system to tackle organized crime, human smuggling, and drug trafficking, and putting at serious risk organizations, communities, and human rights defenders who have worked against impunity and corruption and in favor of the rule of law.

We therefore implore you to immediately take the following actions:

- Publicly condemn the Guatemalan government's blatant disregard for the rule of law and urge the government to change course;
- Suspend assistance for, and equipment transfers to, the central government of Guatemala. The suspended assistance should be redirected to non-governmental programs that directly benefit the Guatemalan people;
- Utilize the authority provided in the Global Magnitsky Human Rights and Corruption Accountability Act to hold corrupt Guatemalan government officials accountable through travel and financial sanctions;
- Strongly and publicly support human rights defenders and civil society organizations throughout the country in their exercise of fundamental rights.

Your administration, with bipartisan support from Congress, has taken significant action in response to the deterioration of the rule of law in Nicaragua and Venezuela. For the sake of the Guatemalan people and U.S. interests, it is imperative that you apply the same standards to the United States' relationship with Guatemala.

Sincerely,



NORMA J. TORRES  
Member of Congress



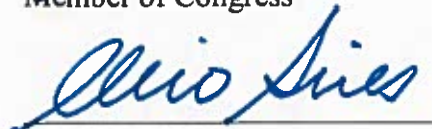
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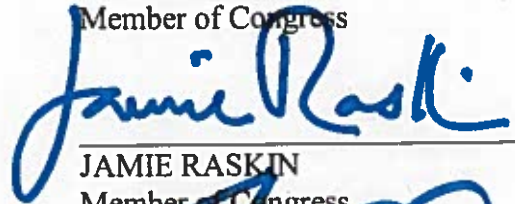
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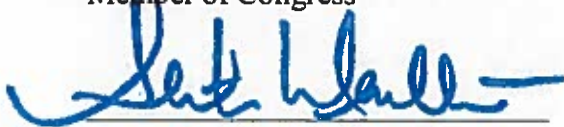
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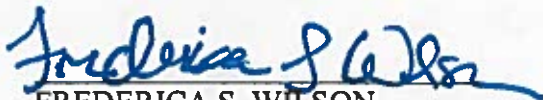
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PETER WELCH  
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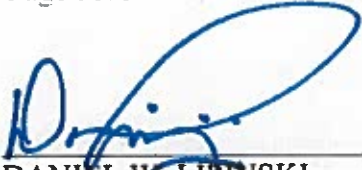
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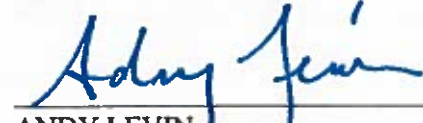
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